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Havik subdivisions. Similarly, Poleya is a blanket term for anyone of the following Untouchable sub-castes, Kembaṭṭi, Aḍiyas, Pāleya, Poleya, Kukka Poleya, Baḍaga Poleya, and Mādiga. Pāleyas are split into further subdivisions.

The Brahmins, Kaṇiyas, and Baṇṇas (or Paṇikas) are the three castes with whom Coorgs come into contact mostly in ritual contexts. The Brahmins are priests not only in the great shrines at Tala Kāvēri, Bhāgamanḍla, and Irpu, but also in numerous small temples scattered all over Coorg. Coorgs from every part of Coorg go on pilgrimage to the great shrines, and at Bhāgamanḍla, where the Kāvēri and Kanaké meet, it is customary for them to offer balls of rice to their ancestors under the guidance of a Brahmin priest.

In those villages where a Brahmin is functioning as priest he is paid annually, at harvest time, a certain quantity of paddy by every house in the village. In this respect he is treated like the barber, washerman, smith, and others. The priest is an essential member of the village organization.

In addition to being priest of the village temple, the Brahmin performs certain ritual services for Coorgs. These services vary from one part of Coorg to another, and not infrequently from one joint family to another: Coorgs in Kiggaṭnāḍ, for instance, are more Sanskritized in their ways than Coorgs elsewhere, and again some Coorg families are more Sanskritized than their neighbours. But everywhere the Brahmin priests perform certain minimum duties: at *putri*, the harvest festival of Coorgs, he comes with consecrated water which he gives the members to drink, and also sprinkles a little of it on certain parts of the house. When a wedding takes place in a Coorg house, he comes to bless the bridal pair and give them consecrated water.

The formation and crystallization of the division of Amma Coorgs is itself an acknowledgement of the strength of the influence of the Brahmins on Coorgs. But the Brahmins do not always operate at the Sanskritic level. Nearly a hundred years ago Dr. Moegling wrote that Coorgs were greatly afraid of the Tantri Brahmins of South Canara.

> The Coorgs have an extraordinary dread of the power of these men. They say that if one of the Tantri Brahmins be offended and curse a man he will lose his sight or hearing or even his life. It is enough, they believe, for one of the masters of the black art to say to a man, 'do you

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songs it is the woman who takes the initiative in a love affair and seduces the man with whom she falls in love.

The general impression one gets from the folksongs is that women enjoyed much greater freedom in the past than they do today. It is probable that in the last 200 years Coorgs have orientated themselves more and more towards the patrilineal Kannaḍigas and moved away from the matrilineal Nāyars. This was accompanied by denying women active roles at the caste dances and festivals, and the home was seen more and more as their proper sphere of action.

But nowadays, under the influence of Western ideas, the Coorg woman is once again coming to the fore. Education is more widespread among Coorg women than among the women of other castes, including Brahmins. They are nurses, teachers, and doctors, and do not hesitate to live outside Coorg. The economic position of Coorgs and the fact that they marry comparatively late are some of the factors responsible for the greater spread of education among Coorg women. The greater ease with which Coorg women have 'emancipated' themselves is probably because they have not been as long under patriarchal ideas regarding womanhood as their sisters in the eastern part of the Peninsula.

VII

Among Coorgs, as among other Indians, respect has to be shown to elders. When a Coorg meets an elder on a ritual occasion he has to salute the latter by bending the upper half of his body and touching the elder's feet thrice with both hands. After each touch the younger man takes his hands to his forehead, where he folds them together. The elder touches the bent head of the younger man with both hands and then brings them together at the chest or forehead. A woman elder is expected to take only her right hand to the right side of her forehead, but I have seen women acknowledge a salutation in exactly the same manner as men.

When he is saluted an elder usually utters a blessing like 'may you live long', or 'may you live happily'. But sometimes the blessing might be a long one, carrying a prayer to God and the ancestors to grant the younger person longevity, happiness, and 'eleven children, boys as well as girls'.

When two equals meet they salute each other merely by bringing

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III

THE RITUAL IDIOM OF COORGS

(1) THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF *MANGALA*

I

EVERY society has a body of ritual, and certain ritual acts forming part of the body of ritual repeat themselves constantly. Not only ritual acts, but also ritual complexes, which are wholes made up of several individual ritual acts, frequently repeat themselves. Several such ritual complexes and some individual ritual acts might be together knit into a still wider ritual whole which repeats itself occasionally.

Salutation is an individual ritual act. It might be of two kinds, either elaborate as that adopted by a young person towards an elder on a ritual occasion, or simple, like that prevailing between two equals. In the former case the younger person thrice touches the older man's feet with both hands, and after each touch he takes the hands to his forehead where he brings them together. In the simpler form of salutation which prevails between equals, each person folds the palms before his chest, and as he does this he moves his head slightly to indicate a bow. The folding of the palms and bowing of the head are the most important parts of the ritual act of salutation.

Salutation of the elaborate kind is only one of several ritual acts in the ritual complex of *mūrta* (*vide infra*), and *mūrta* is again part of *mangala*. Formerly there were several kinds of *mangalas* and the narrowing down of *mangala* to mean marriage exclusively is a fairly recent phenomenon.

Formerly *mangala* was performed to mark the attainment of social adulthood by a boy when his ears were ritually bored by the goldsmith. This *mangala*, the first to be performed for a boy, was called *kemmi kutti mangala*, or 'the *mangala* at which the ears are bored'. The wearing of ear-rings was symbolical of the attainment of social adulthood. One who was physiologically an adult, but who had not undergone the ear-boring *mangala*, did not count as an adult for ritual and social purposes.

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is considered in this chapter while the non-*mangala* part is considered in Chapter V.

There are, then, several *mangalas*, of which marriage is one, and at each of these *mangalas*, *mūrta* is performed. *Mūrta* may be regarded as a typical ritual complex. The ritual complex of *mūrta* consists of several ritual acts, and it is proposed to discover the meaning of each of them by the application of the three rules formulated by Professor Radcliffe-Brown. (1) 'When the same or similar custom is practised on different occasions it has the same or a similar meaning in all of them.'[1] (2) 'When different customs are practised on one and the same occasion there is a common element in the customs.'[2] (3) 'If two rites are found associated with one another on different occasions then there is something in common between the different occasions.'[3]

The central figure of a rite is referred to in this book as the subject. But the subject of *mūrta* is referred to as the 'subject of *mangala*' as *mūrta* is always a part of *mangala*. The term has been retained even where the rite in question is peculiar to marriage, as marriage is also a *mangala*, and the term 'subject' is applicable to the bride as well as the groom. It is only when a rite is performed by either the bride or groom exclusively that 'subject' is discarded in favour of either of the former, more specific terms.

II

The astrologer selects an auspicious day for the performance of *mangala*, and an even more auspicious part of that day for the performance of *mūrta*, which is the most important part of *mangala*. It is interesting to note that the Coorg term *mūrta* is the corrupt form of the Sanskrit *mūhurta*, which means a 'particular division of time, the thirtieth part of a day, a period of 48 minutes'.[4]

The house in which the *mangala* ritual takes place is cleaned, and its walls are colour-washed, and a decorated booth (*pandal*) of five pillars, one of which is a branch of a milk-exuding tree, is erected in front of the house. Poleyas and Medas beat tom-toms and play pipes in front of the house, and Coorg youths dance to the music.

[1] *The Andaman Islanders*, Cambridge, 1933 (2nd edition), p. 235.
[2] Ibid., p. 2.
[3] *Taboo*, Cambridge, 1939, p. 36.
[4] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 825.

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which is kept on the stool before the subject. The lamp rests on a thin bed of rice spread inside the dish. A few betel leaves and areca-nuts are also kept alongside the lamp. The dish, rice, lamp, and betel leaves and nuts are all collectively referred to as '*taḷiyakki-boḷuk*' which literally means 'dish-rice-lamp'. It will be referred to as 'dish-lamp' in future, and a dish-lamp is considered essential on all ritual occasions.

At *mangala*, in addition to the earthen lamp, a *kiṇḍi* full of milk is kept on the dish-lamp. A *kiṇḍi* is a bell-metal vessel with a long spout at the side. At *mangala* every relative performs *vis-à-vis* the subject a series of solidarity rites collectively called *mūrta*, and one of these rites consists in giving the subject a little milk to drink. This is done by the relative holding the *kiṇḍi* in such a way that the tip of the spout touches the subject's mouth. The subject sucks in a few drops of milk through the spout.

Each of the assembled relatives singly performs *mūrta*, described below, towards the subject of *mangala*. Three married women, close relatives of the subject, are required to perform it before anyone else. If the subject's mother is alive and not a widow, she is entitled to be one of the three, and what is more, perform it first, even if the other two are her seniors.

The mother, or senior married woman, begins by sprinkling rice on the two bell-metal lamps on either side of the subject, and then salutes them. The sun-god is saluted next after throwing some rice backwards, over the shoulders. This is followed by the relative depositing a little rice successively at the joints of knees, elbows, and shoulders, and on the head of the subject. The relative then holds the spouted vessel before the subject and he sucks in a little milk through the spout. After this she presents the subject with a gold or silver coin. The subject salutes her by touching her feet with both his hands and carrying the latter back to his forehead. This is done thrice. The married woman blesses him by touching his head and saying, 'may you live long', or 'may you live happily'.

III

It has been mentioned before that *mangala* is an auspicious or good-sacred ceremony and that it has to be performed on an auspicious day. All over India, among Hindus, it is believed that certain

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occasions like a marriage or an ancestor-propitiation, then the house is purified after their departure.

The sacredness or ritual purity of the ancestral house was better preserved by the fact that a woman was not allowed to stay within it during her periods. Such a woman is in a defiled condition and defilement is contagious. It also cuts off the person affected by it from normal participation in social life.

Every ancestral house has an outhouse called *ālé poré* in which a woman stayed for three days during her periods. She attained normal ritual status only on the fourth day after taking a bath. During her periods she had to avoid going near people and objects in a condition of normal ritual status.

The death of even an unrelated adult in the house defiles it and the members of the particular household. After the corpse is removed, both the house and the members of the household have to be purified.

Certain parts of the ancestral house are more sacred than the others. The central hall is very sacred. In the western wall of the central hall is a niche in which burns an earthen or metal lamp. The container is filled with oil, and there is a cotton wick, one end of which comes through the lamp's lip while the rest trails in the oil held by the container. The wick is lit just beyond the lip, and the lamp burns with the lip facing east, the sacred direction. This lamp is called *nellakki boḷuk* (central-hall lamp). It is lit every morning and evening by a woman of the house who salutes it after lighting it. It will be referred to as wall-lamp throughout this book.

A bell-metal lamp, hung from the ceiling of the central hall, is a common sight in Coorg houses. It is called *tūg boḷuk* or hanging lamp, and it is saluted on all ritual occasions. Shri K. J. Chengappa considers the wall-lamp to be the more ancient and more sacred of the two lamps.

The south-western room (*kanni kōmbaré kōṇé*) and the kitchen (*umbaḷa mané*) are very sacred parts of the ancestral house. The south-western direction is a sacred direction, and the south-western pillar (*kanni kamba*) in the central court of a quadrangular house receives ritual respect. On certain occasions like an ancestor-propitiation, a lamp is lit in the south-western room. The kitchen is sacred as food is cooked there: food ought to be cooked in a pure place and care is taken to see that impure persons and objects do not get into the kitchen. Sometimes the periodical offerings of food

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A Coorg never says that a lamp has gone out. He says instead, 784
'the lamp is brighter' (*boḷicha dumb pōchi*). This kind of euphemism 354
is employed on other occasions also: the Koḍagi word for a tiger is '*nari*' which means a jackal in every other Dravidian language.

Again, no Coorg says that 'a cobra has bitten So-and-so'. He says instead, 'a creeper has bitten So-and-so'. Finally, after nightfall no one mentions the barber. If they have to refer to him they say instead, 'the scraper of heads'. Amongst the Hindus in Mysore the barber is referred to after nightfall as 'one whose name may not be mentioned'. A barber is inauspicious, and contact with him is [305] defiling. He is also associated with inauspicious occasions such as death, as mourners have to be shaved. Women specially dread the barber, as until recently among the highest castes widows were required to have their heads shaved entirely.

In every one of the cases we have mentioned circumlocution is employed to avoid reference to an unpleasant object or event. The bite of a snake is always unpleasant and frequently fatal; a barber suggests death and widowhood; and it is much better to think of a tiger as a jackal. The euphemistic reference to the extinction of a [596] lamp has a similar purpose: a lamp is the symbol of the solidarity and strength of the *okka*, and its sudden extinction refers to the decay and extinction of the *okka*. It also refers to the withdrawal of [782] the protective power of the ancestors and the deities who are invoked while saluting a lamp.

Among the Hindus of the eastern plains it is obligatory to light a 788 ●
lamp in the house as soon as it is dark. A house without a lamp 354
suggests that everyone is dead in the house, or that they are too poor to light one.

The ritual attitude prevalent towards the domestic lamp is easily [171]
extended to fire generally, and to the sun. These again provide [821]
points of contact with Sanskritic or All-India Hinduism.

The kitchen stove is a convenient focus for the general ritual 372
attitude existing towards fire. The kitchen stove, like the domestic 596
lamp, stands for the unity, strength, and protective power of the
okka and this fact finds ritual expression. When a member of the [764]
okka is dead and it is decided to cremate his body, the funeral pyre is fired with a torch lighted from embers from the kitchen stove. The torch is made with twigs collected from the domestic burial-ground.

The belief in the protective power of *teḷi ntr* is again the result of 372
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If the ritual chewing of betel leaves takes place earlier than the *māda* day, the chewing only confers partial freedom on the mourners. The third- and second-grade mourners are completely freed from ritual mourning only after the *māda* day, while the first-grade mourners are freed only after performing the *dīkshé uttuva* ritual, several days, if not weeks, after the *māda*. The latter may chew betel leaves after *māda*, but they have to observe certain other mourning taboos till they perform the *dīkshé uttuva* ritual.

XII

The *dīkshé uttuva* ritual consists in the offer of *piṇḍa*, or balls of rice or rice-flour, to the spirit of the departed person. The offerings are made under the guidance of a Brahmin at a centre of pilgrimage.

The *dīkshé uttuva* ritual is frequently performed on the first of Libra, or on the Shivarātri day. The former occurs in October–November, the latter in February–March. On both these days, which are regarded as sacred, people go on pilgrimages to various places along the course of the river Kāvēri, and especially to the source of the river, Tala Kāvēri.

The first of Libra and Shivarātri are not, however, the only occasions for the performance of *dīkshé uttuva*. It may be performed on a new-moon day. Generally, first-grade mourners perform *dīkshé uttuva* after the lapse of what is considered to be a 'decent interval'.

Formerly, first-grade mourners sometimes observed ritual mourning for as long as six months before performing *dīkshé uttuva*. This very rarely happens nowadays. The present tendency is to cut short the mourning period, but even now anyone who performed *dīkshé uttuva* before a month had elapsed after the death would be regarded as either wanting in affection or extremely Westernized, or both.

The first-grade mourners go to Bhāgamaṇḍla, where the river Kanaké joins the Kāvēri. The men mourners have their heads and faces shaved completely, after which they bathe in the confluence. They then dress themselves in the mourning uniform of white shoulder-cloth and waist-cloth. Women mourners similarly bathe and put on ritual robes.

Each of the first-grade mourners then offers a ball of rice-flour mixed with plantain fruit, honey, and a small quantity of gingelly grains. The ingredients of this offering are sold near by, and they

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765 are mixed and offered to the spirit of the dead relative under the
● 788 guidance of a Brahmin priest who is paid a fee for his services.
783 The performance of *dīkshé uttuva* restores first-grade mourners to normal ritual status. Until then they are ritually impure, though this impurity is not as great as that which prevailed until the performance of *māda*, which puts an end to the mourning of all except the first-grade mourners.

The mourners then go to the temple of Bhagaṇḍēshwara and offer worship there. This is followed by a visit to the source of the river Kāvēri at the top of the Brahmagiri mountain. The river rises int wo small perennial springs, after which it disappears underground for some distance to re-emerge near Bhāgamaṇḍla.

One of the springs is larger than the other, and the mourners bathe in the larger spring, after which they offer worship to the very sacred smaller spring. The priests of these springs are Brahmins who live near by. Frequently a tiny representation (*āḷ rūpa* = man form) of the dead person embossed on a thin sheet of silver is dropped into the smaller spring. (It is in the smaller spring that the Kāvēri is annually reborn on the first of Libra, at the moment of the sun's transition from Virgo to Libra. Thousands of pilgrims from all parts of south India go to the source of the river to witness the annual rebirth.)

[171] The Coorg custom of terminating mourning at a centre of pilgrimage is a general Hindu custom. It is one of the numerous points where Coorgs touch the general Hindu ritual idiom. Every caste, sect, and tribe touches the general Hindu ritual idiom at varying numbers of points, but some part, small or large, of the ritual idiom of each group has a more restricted spread. The number of points where the ritual idiom of a local group touches the general Hindu ritual idiom has a tendency to increase with time.

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they live are worshipped on certain occasions. In south India there is a belief that a cobra lives to a very great age, and that as it gets older its tail becomes shorter. During the last period of its life it is said to develop wings. Coorgs share these beliefs, and some of them assert that a cobra-platform is built above the spot where a cobra ended its earthly existence.

All over India there is a reluctance to kill the cobra even though it is a dangerous creature. Coorgs abstain from killing cobras found in temples and believed to be harmless, whereas they do not hesitate to kill cobras found outside temples.

The following incident is significant: *A*'s brother did not consider it a sin to kill cobras. He one day found two cobras copulating and shot one of them dead. Several years passed without *A*'s brother obtaining a son. Some Brahmins told him that he had committed a great sin in killing a sacred creature like the cobra and that he would not have a son till he had performed the necessary expiatory ritual. They further told him that the sin was so great that even after he had performed the expiatory ritual no more than one son would be born to him. He duly performed the necessary expiatory ritual under the guidance of Brahmin priests, and later he made a pilgrimage to the great cobra-shrine of Subramaṇya in the Tuḷu country. Sometime afterwards his wife gave birth to a son, and together with his wife and son he again visited the shrine of Subramaṇya to express his gratitude to the deity.

Formerly, in the month of Scorpio, lamps were lit before the cobra-platform every evening. In addition, in a few Coorg *okkas*, a Brahmin priest visited the platform and worshipped the cobra-deity, using Sanskrit *mantras*.

In the cobra-worship of Coorgs are to be found certain elements which are common to Hindus all over India, others confined to Hindus in Peninsular India, and yet others which are found only in Malabar, South Canara, and Coorg. The worship of cobras takes certain forms in Malabar which are very similar to those in Coorg: in the former area it is common to find in the houses of high-caste Hindus a shrine for cobras in the south-western corner of the large compound round the ancestral house. The cobra-deities in a house are intimately associated with it. The vegetation growing around a cobra-platform may not be cut down, and no one in a condition of ritual impurity may approach the platform.

In the Kannaḍa, Tamil, and Telugu countries, on the other

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When the fortunes of a *nāḍ* were at a low ebb, the elders of that *nāḍ* went on a pilgrimage to the patron-deity of the *nāḍ* and prayed to him for the birth of a hero in their midst.

Legends grew up about a hero. Chegeṭṭira Appaṇṇa is supposed to have accomplished everything he did before he was sixteen days old. The hero had power to curse. After he died, he became a powerful spirit, a *bira*.

The boundary of a *nāḍ* obtains importance on some ritual occasions. A groom passing in state through a *nāḍ* to the bride's village is given the 'plantain honour' at the boundary of the *nāḍ*.

Richter describes a custom which brings out the ritual importance of the *nāḍ*-boundary:

> In cases of sore afflictions befalling a whole village or *nāḍ* such as small-pox, cholera, cattle-disease, the ryots [peasants] combine to appease the wrath of Māriamma [the goddess Māri who presides over these epidemics] by collecting contributions of pigs, rice, coconuts, bread and plantains, from the different houses and depositing them at the *mandu* [green]; whence they are carried in a procession with tom-toms. In one basket there is some rice, and the members of each house on coming out bring a little rice in the hand, waving it round the head, throw it into the basket, with the belief that the dreaded evil will depart with the rice. At last the offerings are put down on the *nāḍ*-boundary, the animals are killed, their blood is offered on a stone, the rice and basket are left, and the rest of the provisions consumed by those composing the procession. The people of adjoining villages and *nāḍs* repeat the ceremony, and thus the epidemic is supposed to be banished from the country. In still greater calamities, a flock of sheep is driven from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ* and, at last, expelled from the country.[1]

X

There is no social unit among Coorgs which is without a head. Every *okka* has a headman and the headman's wife is the head of the women in the *okka*. A temple has a headman with a number of officials under him. A village has a village-headman, and above the village is the *nāḍ*, and every *nāḍ* has at least one *nāḍ*-headman, and frequently more than one. The highest category of headmen are, however, the headmen of *sīmé* or *désha*, of whom there are eight in all.

Coorgs have a keen sense of discipline, which is associated in

[1] *Manual of Coorg*, p. 170.

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destructive of sin (*pāpa*). Bathing in the Kāvēri on certain days such as the first of Libra and Shivarātri is specially productive of *puṇya*.

The Kāvēri is called '*dakshiṇa ganga*' or 'southern Ganges', and the Kāvēri myth (see Appendix) tells us that waters of the Ganges and other sacred rivers and seas are present in the source of the river on the first of Libra at the moment of the river's birth. The faithful believe that there is an underground passage connecting the source of the river with the Ganges at Benares. Pilgrims to the Tala Kāvēri, like pilgrims to Benares, return with the water of the sacred river in sealed copper pots. This water is used for ritual purification and drinking on certain days. Coorg pilgrims sprinkle the holy water on members of their *okka*, and on the house, granary, and cattle.

Offerings of balls of rice-flour are made to dead relatives on the banks of the Kāvēri; and the ends of the garments of the husband and wife are tied together while bathing in the river and in the larger of the two springs of Tala Kāvēri. Both these concepts are common to Hindus all over India.

The Kāvēri Myth, whose authorship appears to be Brahminical, has the Ganges Myth for its model. As is well known, the Ganges meets the Jumna at Allahabād, and to this, Hindu mythology adds a third river, the Saraswati, which is said to flow underground and join unseen the first two rivers. The confluence of the Ganges, Jumna, and the mythical Saraswati is called '*triveṇi sangama*' or 'union of three rivers'.

At Bhāgamaṇḍla, about three miles from the source of the Kāvēri, it meets the Kanaké. But to this the Kāvēri Myth adds a third river, the Sujyoti, which is said to flow underground and join the first two.

There is a myth about practically every river in India, and in every one of these myths some Sanskritic deities, and sages and characters from the epics and the *purāṇas*, take part. Each myth in time becomes a part of the vast corpus of Hindu mythology. Each myth makes sacred certain features of local geography by associating deities, and characters from the epics and *purāṇas*, with them. The myths abound in inconsistencies which, however, do not bother the bulk of the Hindus.

On certain occasions Coorg women are required to worship the domestic well, and this is referred to as '*ganga pūja*'. A similar

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custom exists everywhere in south India among Hindus. Water is identified with the holy Ganges, and such an identification teaches a Hindu to regard the Ganges as a deity. It opens a window on Sanskritic Hinduism.

On the way to Tala Kāvēri from Bhāgamaṇḍla there is an immense boulder called 'Bhīma's pebble'. It is said that Bhīma, one of the Pāṇḍava brothers, found a tiny 'pebble' in his dinner which he picked up and threw away. What was a tiny pebble to Bhīma is an immense boulder to ordinary human beings. Bhīma's strength was prodigious, and his strength, enormous appetite, and chivalry have made him the most lovable of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, the heroes of the epic, Mahābhārata. 'Bhīma's pebble' makes the epic more immediate to Coorgs and other Hindus in Coorg.

The mountain in which the Kāvēri rises is called Brahmagiri, and it is said that the god Brahma has settled down on top of the mountain. Brahma was in two minds as to whether he should settle down on top of the Brahmagiri mountain or a neighbouring one, and he finally decided on the former as it was higher than the latter by a rice grain.

While ideally the Kāvēri is sacred to every Hindu, actually it is mostly Hindus from various parts of south India, especially Mysore, Malabar, and the Tamil country who go on pilgrimage to the river-source on the first of Libra. Similarly the shrine of Subramaṇya is sacred to every Hindu, though actually only Hindus from the Kannaḍa- and Tulu-speaking areas visit it. But there are centres of pilgrimage such as the Temple of Venkāṭāchala at Tirupati in the Telugu country visited by Hindus from practically every part of south India. The temples of Mīnākshi at Madura and Rāmēshwara at Rāmēshwaram in south-east India are visited by Hindu pilgrims from every part of India. In continental India, too, there are several places of pilgrimage for Hindus from every part of India.

Deities too have varying 'spreads' even though ideally they are sacred to all Hindus. In fact, over a period of time 'spread' shows a dynamic quality: a deity who commanded the devotion of a king enlarged his 'spread' to include the territory ruled by the king.

Peninsular India is an area of enormous cultural diversity, but it forms a loose unity viewed in relation to continental India, just as India itself exhibits some unity when viewed in relation to the rest

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VIII

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

I

243 788 COORG is primarily an agricultural country, and the bulk of the Coorg community is directly dependent on the land. Even those who are employed in the government have one or more branches of their *okkas* living in the ancestral house and attending to the cultivation of their ancestral lands.

There was no coffee in Coorg over a hundred years ago, and rice was then the most important crop in every way. A Coorg *okka*, and the family (or families) of Poleyas who were its slaves, cultivated the ancestral rice-fields. The Poleyas did much of the actual manual work on the estate under the close supervision of their Coorg masters; and every member of the Coorg *okka* directly or indirectly contributed to the work on the estate.

243 [438] [796] A Coorg was completely preoccupied with the cultivation of rice from May to January, beginning with the first ploughing of the fields in May and ending with the harvesting of the crop in January. The surplus rice was sold in Malabar every summer, and this necessitated the organization of an annual caravan in which every *okka* in the village (or *nāḍ*) participated. The festivals of the village-deities and weddings were performed in the summer months, after the men had returned from Malabar. Thus the social activities of a Coorg revolved round and adjusted themselves to the cultivation of rice and the sale of the surplus in Malabar.

The ancestral estate on which rice is grown, the ploughing, sowing, transplanting, and harvesting of the crop, the granary in which paddy is stored, and the measures used for measuring paddy and rice all receive ritual attention.

423 778 784 The ancestral estate, the most valuable part of which is the rice-field, is regarded as sacred. A Coorg is not allowed to walk in it wearing his sandals, just as he is not allowed to enter the inner parts of the ancestral house, or a temple, with his sandals on. He is also not allowed to whistle, or hold an umbrella over his head, while walking in the ancestral estate: both these acts are not consistent with the ritual respect which the estate has to be accorded.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

The entire rice-field (*varga*) is cut up into a number of small rectangular plots ridged up on all the four sides. Each plot (*tēva*) is referred to by a distinct name, and one of these plots is regarded as the main plot and it has the same name as the entire rice-field. The traditional association between an *okka* and its ancestral estate is symbolized in the custom of burying the umbilical cord of the eldest son of the head of the *okka* in the main plot of the ancestral estate. The eldest son is the one who is going to become the head of the *okka* in course of time, and as head of the *okka* he will have to look after the ancestral rice-field. The main plot stands for the entire rice-field, and it is entirely proper that the umbilical cord of the future head of the *okka* should be buried in the main plot. It may be recalled, in this connexion, that during the periodical ancestor-propitiation, the Banna oracle, possessed by an ancestor, may demand to be shown round the rice-field in order to see for himself whether it is looked after properly. Thus a Coorg continues to take an interest in the affairs of his *okka* even after his death, which means that he continues to care for the rice-field on which the prosperity and happiness of the *okka* and thus, indirectly, of the total society depends.

Every stage of the cultivation of the rice crop is marked by ritual. The main plot of the ancestral rice-field is ritually ploughed on the first of Aries, the beginning of the new year according to the solar calendar. Either the head of the *okka*, or a younger member who is considered to be specially suitable by the astrologer, ritually ploughs the main plot during an auspicious period of time. Regular ploughing of the rice-fields commences only after the ritual ploughing on New Year's Day.

Paddy is sown in the nurseries at an auspicious period of time. When the plants are 10–12 inches high, they are transferred to the various plots in the rice-fields. The plucking of the young plants and their transplantation are both begun during auspicious periods. The transplantation of the young plants is a highly complicated task requiring the co-ordination of the work of a number of people. It is especially so if the estate is a big one.

The Kāvēri festival includes a rite called *bottu* (lit., fear) and this is intended to protect the growing crop, the woods on the estate, and the domestic well.

One of the most important calendar festivals of Coorgs is the *putri* (lit., new rice) when the paddy sheaves are ritually cut.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

243 788 This latter rite is the crucial point of the festival which lasts nine to ten days, the seven days previous to the sheaf-cutting being spent in singing, dancing, and playing games. On the day following the cutting of sheaves there is a domestic feast, a dance, and sports for all the villagers. This is followed by a dance for the entire *nāḍ*, and a collective hunt and dinner for the entire village (or *nāḍ*).

243 787 The rite of cutting the sheaves takes place on the full-moon day in the month of Scorpio under either of the constellations, *krittiké* or *rōhiṇi*. Formerly the hereditary astrologer of the Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi in Nālknāḍ used to decide the day and time for the ritual cutting of sheaves for the whole of Coorg Proper excluding Kiggaṭnāḍ. The local astrologer then decided for each high caste *okka* in his village the member who was most suitable for performing the rite of cutting the sheaves. The member selected for this honour had to wear the white gown.

243 788 On the festival day, very early in the morning, various leaves and creepers are gathered for the rite of *néré kaṭṭuvudu*. The trees and creepers most common locally are chosen for this purpose, and they frequently vary from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ*. They seem to symbolize the principle of fertility in vegetable nature. A wish for growth is also indicated in another rite, and such a wish is commonly indicated in harvest festivals in south India.

A part of the kitchen floor is cleaned with a solution of cow dung and a new mat is spread on it. A tripod-stool is made to stand on the mat, and a dish-lamp is placed on the stool. A harvest-basket containing the leaves, and short lengths of creepers, is kept near the dish-lamp. Later, at an auspicious time, a leaf of each variety is taken, arranged one upon the other, a short length of *inyoḷi* creeper crowning the pile of leaves. The leaves are then rolled round the creeper and the roll is secured with a length of *achchi* fibre. A number of such rolls are made.

A harvest-basket is filled with paddy and this is placed on the mat near the dish-lamp. Two measures and a small pot, filled with paddy, rice, and rice-flour respectively, are arranged one upon the other on the paddy in the basket. The new bamboo vessel (*kutti*) which the Mēda brought in the morning is stood near the basket on the mat. A little milk, honey, and *ghi* are poured into the vessel. Bits of coconut, fresh ginger, and green rattan cane, and a small quantity of gingelly grains are also put into it. Finally, the new sickle which the blacksmith brought is left in it.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

The members of the *okka* then eat a dish of cooked harvest yam (*putri geṇasu*, which ripens at the time of the harvest festival) mixed with honey and *ghī*.

At the auspicious time fixed by the astrologer, the sheaf-cutter leaves the house carrying the bamboo vessel in his hand. Before him goes a girl carrying a dish-lamp. A band marches farther ahead.

As soon as he reaches the rice-field, the sheaf-cutter salutes the sacred eastern direction and the field. He ties a leaf-roll to the bottom of a rice plant and pours a little of the contents of the bamboo vessel on it. Everyone shouts '*poli, poli, dēva*' (increase, increase, O god), and a shot is fired from a gun. The sheaf-cutter cuts a number of plants, taking care to see that each time he cuts an odd number.

After the party reaches home, the sheaf-cutter's feet are washed, and he is given milk to drink. He deposits the bamboo vessel in the kitchen.

He then prepares *yēḷakki puṭṭ* (seven rice-pudding), kneading together a quantity of rice-flour, a few plantains, some milk and honey, and seven of each of the following: new rice grains from the sheaves, gingelly grains, tiny stones, and bits of coconut, ginger, and green rattan cane. Small balls are made of this mixture and offered to the lamps in the south-western room and ancestor-shrine. Later everyone eats a little of the mixture.

Leaf-rolls (*néré*) and sheaves are tied to every part of the house. The sweet, liquid dish, *pāyasa*, is prepared and into this are put seven new rice grains.

The rites performed at the harvest festival stress, directly or indirectly, the great value of rice to Coorgs. The astrologer decides not only when the sheaves should be cut but who should be chosen for this important task. New articles are used for this ritual. Elaborate taboos surround the person of the sheaf-cutter, and solidarity rites, in which valuable articles like milk and honey are used, are performed towards the sheaves before cutting them.

Some of the rites performed, like tying plants and creepers locally prolific to every part of the house, and uttering a prayer for increase before cutting the sheaves, express a desire for plenty. The ritual eating of the new rice, and the eating of the yams and vegetables which ripen at this time, are another aspect of the harvest rites.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

243 On New Year's Day a clod of ploughed earth is brought home
788 and deposited in the granary. When a man sees paddy in the ear for the first time, he goes home, stands before the granary, and says, 'I saw paddy in the ear, I saw paddy in the ear, do not be startled, do not be astonished, O granary.' He tells the granary that there is going to be a bumper harvest, a harvest that will burst the granary. At the Kāvēri festival, pilgrims carry home a handful of rice from the granary (called '*akshaya pātra*', the mythical vessel of increase) in the Bhaganḍēshwara temple. This rice is put into the domestic granary to ensure a bumper harvest.

Rice is essential to the Coorg's survival, and formerly it was also the chief source of wealth. Its cultivation is the most important activity in which the *okka*, the nuclear unit of Coorg society, is engaged, and the axis round which revolve other activities. A long drought as well as excess of rain is likely to ruin the crop. Rain is a friend only if it comes when wanted and keeps away when not wanted. Proper rains in sufficient quantities mean a good crop, and abundance of rice means food, wealth, and the ability to make sacrifices to ancestors and festivals in honour of deities. It gives one the means with which one can get one's sons and daughters married, to keep one's servants, to give the feasts which have to be given, and to perform other obligations. It is because of its enormous social importance that rice, and everything associated with it in any way, receives ritual attention.

II

538 In Coorg folklore, Malabar is referred to as the 'land of ignor-
186 ance' (*ajnāna bhūmi*), and this is presumably due to certain matrilineal castes living there. All the patrilineal peoples of south India seem to have regarded matriliny as a very odd custom. The people of the Kannaḍa and Tamil countries occasionally refer to Malabar as '*stri malayāḷa*', which means 'Malabar which is dominated by
[723] women'. There are myths which try to account for the oddness of Malabar: according to a myth which is widespread over the whole of south India, the entire Malabar coast was created by Parashurāma, the great Brahmin enemy of Kshatriyas till he was finally defeated by the Kshatriya prince, Rāma, the hero of Rāmāyaṇa, and an *avatār* of Vishṇu. The folktale on p. 221, which gives an account of a solitary act of disobedience on the part of Laksh-

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

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Pilgrims at Bahamandala

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Pilgrims performing religious rites at Bahamandala

[facing p. 3]

During the month of November, a lamp is lighted every evening to Natas, and coconuts are offered as oblations.

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Pilgrimage

The Coorgs go on pilgrimage to Irjatre at the foot of Lakshmana-tirtha fall in Kiggatnad after the Sivaratri in February or March, and on the Talai Kaveri Jatra to the source of the river Cauvery in October. Amongst the Jatras beyond their country, those visited by the Coorgs are four, Subramanis on the northern frontier of Coorg in December, Baitur in Malabar, in February, and Nanjangudu in Mysore which comes off in December. In exceptional cases they go to Benares.

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Demon Worship

The Coorgs are demon worshippers because of the evil influences of certain malignant spirits, which can render their life more gloomy and wretched. The demons are called Kulis, who are believed to be capable of carrying away the souls of the dying members in a family. When any trouble arises in a house, and strange voices are believed to be heard in or near it, a *Kanya* (a Malabar astrologer) is consulted as to the cause of it, and he speaks of the influence of some *Kuli* who must have carried away the soul of somebody either in the house or in the neighbourhood. He suggests that a demon mask has to be performed for the liberation of the soul. It takes place once a year at Kutta, or at any other place once in two or three years.

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The master of the house ties some money in a piece of cloth which is suspended from a rafter of the house as a pledge for the performance of the ceremony. Sometimes he ties his brass plate up there and eats his food on a plantain leaf as a vow. For the demon mask, either a Malayali magician or a true Ajjala Palya is sent for, and the ceremony is performed in the courtyard of the house owner. Demon masks are performed in the name of one or two of the five demons, Bhamandi, Kalluguttl, Panjurli, Gulika and Goraka. The details of the ceremony are the same as those described for the exorcism of the ancestral spirits. The food of the performer in trance is called Kuli Barani. The liberation of the soul is thus effected. The demon that has thus committed the theft begs to leave the soul free. In the event of his refusal, the performer throws a handful of rice on the member of the house standing near him, and thus transfers the spirit to him. The spirit alights on his back, when he falls in a swoon, and is soon carried away by others into the house. The final act of a demon mark is the decapitation of pigs in front of the so called *kanhikotta* or demon abode. It may be near to or far away from the house or village. Fowls are sacrificed upon it. One pig suffices for house affair, but several pigs are required when a whole village is involved. The heads are given to the performers, and the trunks supply the house or village divines.

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CHAPTER XI

AMMA COORG

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[162] THE Amma Coorgs belong to the indigenous priesthood of Coorg. They
[776] numbered 666 in the Census of 1931, 336 being males and 330 females. Their common name is Amma Kodagas, which would naturally signify Coorgs devoted to the worship of Amma or the goddess of the chief river of the
173 country, the Cauvery. The Brahmans invented a mythical origin which is not in accord with the Cauvery Purana.

As reward for his austerities the sage Kavera was blessed with a daughter, Kaveri, who was proposed to be given in marriage to Agastya, another sage who resided on the Brahmagiris. Kaveri did not accept the proposal. She assumed the shape of a river and fled from the mountain. Agastya in hot pursuit overtook her at Kadianad and persuaded her to submit their dispute to the arbitration of their friends. They called three families of Amma Kodagas and six of Coorgs. The former sided with Agastya and the latter with Kaveri. The Amma Kodagas decided that Kaveri should not be allowed to go. The Coorgs said that a woman should not be forced to marry against her will. This provoked Agastya, who pronounced a curse that the generation of Coorgs should become less, that their women should not tie their garments in front, that the sown rice should not grow, and that their cows should not give milk. But Kaveri Amma who was the patroness of the Coorgs counteracted the curse as well as she could, and said, "The Coorgs shall increase, but the Amma Coorgs decrease, the Coorg women shall tie their garments behind; the sown paddy shall be transplanted, the cows shall be milked after the calves have drunk". So saying, she tried to escape and on being held by Agastya by the border of her garment, she turned to the right and flowed
[778] rapidly away. Hence the place where this occurred is called Balamuri (turn-
[788] ing to the right). A linga was erected at the spot by the Brahmans. It is
485 yearly visited in the month of *November* at the time of the Kaveri feast by Coorgs and others, who bathe in the river. Dodda Vira Rajendrar built here a rest-house, which, though built a century ago, is in tolerable preservation. Nothing more is known about the real history of the Amma Coorgs,
174 but a few facts may be given as evidence that they are the remains of an
793 ancient priesthood.

101 The Amma Coorgs observe in common with the Coorgs the great fes-
793 tivals of the country, and act as priests. They dress like Coorgs and at the
[796] same time wear the holy thread. It seems that they inclined towards the

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

the day. Ancient ballads are recited, extempore singers extol the names of the principal persons among the assembled relatives. Now the Muhúrta (the propitious hour) has come. At the same time both bride and bridegroom are conducted to the wedding-seat in their respective houses. The guests put themselves in order. One after the other approaches the bridegroom or the bride, strews some grains of rice upon his or her head, lifts a brass-vessel filled with milk from the ground, and pours some drops into his or her mouth, puts a piece of money, not less than three annas into his or her hand, and passes on. When the Muhúrta is over, the bridegroom or the bride retires into another room, where they continue to sit, sometimes for hours, until the last of the guests has come, and offered his salutation and gifts. At the end of the Muhúrta the wedding company apply themselves to the dinner prepared for them. The joy of the feast is heightened by the songs of the Coorg-bards, who sing of the glories of the relatives of the house, of the families belonging to the village community, and repeat the Palmé's (ancient songs) which they have learned from their fathers. I cannot refrain from entering here the humorous wedding-song translated by Mr. A. Graeter from the Coorg original:—

Wedding Song.

God Almighty, live and rule,
Rule as our Lord and God.
Rule as Sovereign, O King!
On the surface of the earth
Coorg is like a string of pearls,
Though one of the smallest kingdoms.
In this land they count 12 valleys,
And the Nádu are 25;
But in our Nád for ever,
Like a flow'r of paradise,
Blooms the name of Appayandra.

In this Appayandra house
Lived a man of reputation,
Mandanna the mighty hero;
Whom he offered a petition
To the ruler of the country
For a goodly jumma land,
He received it as a present.
For his money he now bought
Holeyas to be his servants,
And they laboured on his farm.
Bullocks too, his fields to plough,

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

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Thou hast built the solid gate,
And the courts around the house.
Oh! my father; yesterday
Fallen on the bed of sickness,
And to-day before the feet
Of the Lord of earth and heaven,
And tomorrow, like the sun
Setting in the cloudy sky,
Thou shalt sink into the grave.
Woe! my father, thou art gone!
Woe! my father, gone for ever!

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4. POPULAR FESTIVALS OF THE COORGS.

The festivals of the Coorgs are not numerous. A weekly day of rest is recognised as little by the Coorgs as by other Hindus.

The two great annual festivals take place in quick succession towards the end of the year. The *Kávéri-feast* in Tulámása i. e. the time of the sun's entering into the sign of Libra in October, and the *Huttari* or Harvest-feast in November or December.

Before the monsoon in April and may the *Bhagavati-festival* is observed all over Coorg and in August, generally at the first break of the monsoon, the *Keilmurta* or festival of arms, is celebrated by the youths and men of Coorg.

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a. The Kávéri-feast.

About the middle of October all Coorg prepares for the grand festival of Kávéri. The sun has gained the ascendency over the monsoon clouds. A few passing showers only may still be expected. The rice valleys are clothed with rich paddy approaching maturity; the forests and grass hills resplendent with the freshness and beauty of spring. Every Coorg house sends one or two representatives to Tala-Kávéri. Also pil-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

grims from Malayálam, Tulu and Mysore repair to the sacred-place by thousands. Distinguished amongst these are the Brahmini-widows—those sad figures, clothed with reddish brown garments, one end of which covers the shorn head. A bundle under one arm they trudge along, supported by a stick; perhaps they come by their own impulse, perhaps in the name and for the benefit of some sick relation. The nearer the pilgrims approach the end of their journey, the more frequent and the more numerous are the festive caravans of men, women and children in holiday-costume, who now rest in picturesque groups on the shady banks of streams, now proceed in gay defiles over the grassy hills. With the last ascent of a small elevation near the foot of the Tala-Kávéri-hill the view of the upper basin of the Kávéri valley, which is rather wide and flanked by steep hills, suddenly bursts upon us. The Bhágamandala temple with its copper roof is conspicuous in the middle of the valley and close to the Kávéri. A few rows of houses near it are changed into a busy mart. Thousands of people move to and fro, and the humming noise of the multitude sounds like the distant surf of the ocean. Hundreds are engaged in bathing in the sacred stream before they enter the temple, which forms a large square with an open centre like a Coorg house. Along the road pedlars are squatted behind their paltry wares which are spread under a flimsy awning. Mendicant Sanyásis with hollow sounding conch and brass gong in hand push, blowing and ringing, through the crowd. Hourly the multitude increases; new arrivals descend from all the neighbouring mountain pathways into the valley. Hundreds of people have already proceeded to reach the Kávéri source, in order to build for themselves and their expected friends sheltering booths against the cold damp night air. A pathway leads over paddy-fields through steep jungle and over rocky mountain ridges to the sacred spot. As they ascend, they shout "Náráyana, Oh!

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

Nárâyana" and the echo is taken up by succeeding caravans. Near the summit there is an overhanging rock, called Bîmakallu, which forms a sheltering abode for some fakirs during the festive season. The source of the river is enclosed by a stone basin, over which a small shrine of granite slabs is built. From this reservoir the pure water percolates into a tank of about 30 feet square, which by an outlet keeps the water to a level of 2½ feet. On two sides there are rough stone terraces scooped out of the hill side and above the third terrace on a dip of the hill there is a small square temple dedicated to Ganapati with a few huts close by for the abode of the residing Brahmin-pûjâris.

At the moment, fixed by the Astrologer, of the sun's entering into the sign of Libra, whether by day or by night, the pilgrim, who is anxious to experience the full power of the sin cleansing bath, must descend into the holy tank. With the approach of the hour an ever increasing multitude surrounds the tank, impatiently waiting for the propitious moment. Now the priest gives the sign and the living throng, old and young, men and women rush in wild confusion into the water, duck three times and drink as often of the water, and, on emerging, offer a small gift to the priests, who sit near the shrine, receive the money and pour some pure water over the devotee's head. Before leaving, most of the pilgrims fill a hollow reed (Wóte) with water from the sacred spring and carry it home for the benefit of their relatives, and for purifying their wells. The effectual bathing season lasts for a whole month but with decreasing virtue. From 8 to 15,000 pilgrims may annually visit Tala-Kávéri, but the interest in the place seems to be on the decrease. The presiding Brahmins have secured some jungle for coffee cultivation in the neighbourhood of the temple, and the Coorgs complain, that the priests take greater care of their coffee gardens than of

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

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their religious duties, and only lately some valuable portions of the Tala-Kávéri shrine were stolen!

The Kávéri-day is celebrated also in the Coorg houses by those who remain at home, and is considered as a high holiday.

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Before sunrise, the mistress of the house early leaves her bed, goes to the cooking-room, takes a brass-dish, throws into it a handful of rice, and having spread it over the whole plate, puts a common lamp, which has been in daily use, into the centre. The burning lamp is surrounded with flowers gathered from a garden or the jungle. To these a fresh, young cucumber is added. Then a red handkerchief is placed behind the lamp. Upon the handkerchief one jewel of gold or silver is laid. The mistress perhaps takes the necklace from her own person on the occasion, which is considered the luckiest choice. Then a good mat is spread on the ground, and a tripod, which serves the Coorgs for a dinner-table, placed upon the mat. Upon the tripod the woman sets the brass-plate with the rice, lamp, cloth and jewel. This done, she proceeds to bake little cakes from a dough of rice-flour and plantains, well kneaded together on the preceding night, upon a stone-mould well heated. Three of these little cakes are added to the contents of the plate. Then she calls the inmates of the house. They all rise instantly, go straight into the kitchen, and fold their hands before the tripod, as in adoration. One of the men takes three or five of the fresh cakes and carries them down to the rice-fields. There he puts the cakes upon one of the bamboo sticks, which have been placed in every field on the preceding day, crowned with a bundle of Keibala creepers. The field next to the house is chosen for this offering. When the cakes are duly laid upon the top of the creeper-crowned pole, the man gives three great shouts and returns to the house. It is now about five o'clock. (The cakes are afterwards gathered by the Holeyas, who live in the neighbour-

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4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

open space before the temple, many of them possessed by devils of their own, which belong to the host of Pannangalamma, all of them jumping and dancing and beating their drums and gongs in the most approved fashion. Every one of them, man, woman and child, carries a long dry bamboo-stick. These bamboos are piled up in front of the temple, like soldiers' muskets, and set fire to at night, when the Holeyas dance round the flames until the pile breaks and falls to the ground. (If the pile fall towards the east, it is considered a lucky omen.) While these things take place outside, the temple-yard resounds with the voices of Coorgs, singing hymns in honor of Bhagavati, and the wild notes of many drums, through which the shrill words of the demoniac Coorg now and then pierce—a dismal scene!

On the seventh day, after the morning circumambulation of the temple, votive offerings are brought by the villagers of the parish. In each village the people collect at the house of some one, who has vowed a bullock-load of rice or cocoanuts, and take their breakfast. After breakfast, the whole company proceeds with the offering to the temple, singing and making music. The gift having been presented to the priest, the party returns to the village, to carry another contribution to the temple in the same manner. Thus the forenoon is spent. Then the young men dance for some hours. Music heightens the joy of the entertainments, and all the rest of the community, women, girls, children and old men, sit round the temple-yard—admiring spectators. At four o'clock the idol is taken out and carried round the shrine, the whole assembly joining in the procession. The Brahman-carrier of Bhagavati is possessed by the goddess. He stretches out his hand during the strange dance, which he performs with the idol upon his head. Whoever can, puts some money into his open hand. He, conscious enough in this respect, casts every

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

796 [782] piece given to him into a copper vessel, held by the Tantri. With the setting sun the business of the day is concluded.

The morning of the eighth day is devoted to the delivery of votive presents, as on the preceding day. At ten o'clock [535] dances are performed by the young men, as on the seventh day. This continues till two o'clock, when all the good shots 796 526 assemble for shooting at a mark. A cocoanut is hung up in some tree between two plantain-bunch-tops as a mark. He who hits the nut, is rewarded with a present of three annas and the honor of the name of a good marksman. Then one of the Takkas, or the Coorg-dancer before Bhagavati, distributes a number of cocoanuts (of which there is an abundance, as every family must bring one or two) to the young men. One seizes a nut between his hands, others try to take it out of his grasp. In a few moments the whole ground is filled 796 with parties struggling for cocoanuts. He who succeeds in forcing the nut out of the hands of the original possessor, [788] carries it away as his prize. At three o'clock the idol-procession takes place again, after which all the men go with the idol to the river or the tank, to bathe the goddess and themselves.

Ninth day. From each house one person appears at the temple, bearing the yearly money-contribution, which is deli- [794] vered to the Takkas. The collection being made, the salaries of the temple-officers and servants of the temple are paid. [574] Then the Brahmans give a good, undefiled dinner of pure vegetable dishes, to their Coorg supporters, first, of course, eating themselves, and leaving the rest to their friends. This temple dinner is the last act in the Bhagavati festival.

527 **d. The Keilmûrta festival.**

The Keilmûrta festival is a very different affair, altogether [787] a Coorg business. Early in the month of Leo (July—August) the Takka of the gráma calls some respectable men to

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

782 cends. He sits down in Hindu fashion, muttering mantras.
789 Pieces of wood are laid across the pit, and covered with earth
791 a foot or two deep. Upon this platform a fire of jack-wood
178 is kindled, into which butter, sugar, different kinds of grain, etc. are thrown. This sacrifice continues all night, the Panika sacrificer above, and his immured colleague below, repeating their incantations all the while. In the morning the pit is opened, and the man returns to the light of day. These sacrifices are called *Máranada bali* or *death-atonements*. They cost from 10 to 15 Rupees. Instead of a human being, a cock is sometimes shut up in the pit and killed afterwards.

789 In cases of sore afflictions befalling a whole gráma or nád
782 such as small-pox, cholera or cattle-disease, the ryots combine
753 to appease the wrath of *Mári-amma* by collecting contributions of pigs, fowls, rice, cocoanuts, bread, and plantains from the different houses, and depositing them at the Mandu; whence they are carried in a procession with tomtoms. In one basket there is some rice and the members of each house on coming out bring a little rice in the hand and, waving it round the head, throw it into the basket with the belief that the dreaded evil will depart with the rice. At last the offerings are put down on the nád boundary, the animals are killed, their blood is offered on a stone, the rice and basket are left, and the rest of the provisions consumed by the persons composing the procession. The people of the adjoining grámas or náds repeat the same ceremony and thus the epidemic is supposed to be banished from the country. In still greater calamities a flock of sheep is driven from nád to nád and at last expelled from the country.

● 788 **e. Pilgrimages of the Coorgs within and outside**
783 **their own country.**

Besides the annual *Tale-Káveri festival* in October and the *Kuttadamma-játre* in April there is a large concourse of people in February during *Sivarátri* at *Herumálu* in Kiggat-

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nád and the day following at *Irpu* five miles further on where, at the foot of the "*Lakshmanatírtha fall*," thousands of pilgrims submit to the supposed sin-cleansing shower-bath. The way thither leads through a jungle, so that the landscape of Irpu, forming an open valley with a high wall of mountains at the back, bursts all at once upon the wanderer's view. The Lakshmanatírtha which, in its primordial course, descends in beautiful cascades over the almost perpendicular mountain wall lies before the eye and calmly meanders through the rice valley. On the right bank of it the Dévastána, an unsightly building, but adorned by a splendid specimen of the beautiful scarlet-flowered Asóge-tree, is situated. Near it and all along the banks of the stream pilgrims build their booths. The bathing place is 200 feet above the temple. The way is romantic, with steep rocks to the right, to the left the shallow winding stream, tumbling and foaming over large boulders, but during the monsoon swelling into a thundering torrent. All around the scene are the hundreds of pilgrims, Coorgs and Malayálam people. Every few steps a beggar is encountered exhibiting his deformities or sores. Here lies a fanatic as if dead with a wooden nail through his cheeks; there a boy with a lancet through his outstretched tongue and a smoking chatti on his stomach; here another man with a long knife across his throat, and a horrible corpse-like appearance. At the holy bath the stream high above breaks through a woody embrasure over a succession of rocky ledges till it spreads itself into a foaming shower-bath, received in a stony caldron formed by slippery sharp-edged rocks. Here the crowd of pilgrims finds its goal. The bathing multitude now forces its way under the falling spray. But few can, at the same time, make use of the sin-cleansing bath. See that old woman with bent head right under the spray, her body trembles from the shock, yet for several minutes she perseveres. There a father lifts his screaming child under the splashing water;

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788 783 here with firm grasp a husband drags his timid spouse along the rock and into the caldron; and even the tender babe at his mother's breast is brought within the influence of the bath. Dripping and shivering the bathers force their way back through the new arrivals and seek a sunny spot to change their garments. The pressure is great, the path slippery, and the confusion and pressure alarming. According to [197] [823] Brahminical superstition the colour of the water in the caldron indicates the intensity of the guilt of the bathing pilgrim. The darker its hue the greater the guilt, and yet the phenomenon depends only on the accident, whether the falling water is intercepted by the bodies of the bathers or whether it reaches the basin directly, and by the force of its fall is beaten into foam.

788 793 798 799 After bathing the pilgrims assemble at about 4 o'clock in the temple, where a Brahmin dances before the idol shrine with a brass image of Isvara upon his head; another Brahmin with a plate receives the small money offerings, and a third distributes Prasáda i. e. flowers and globules of sandal. The native officials first make their obeisance, the most devoted amongst them even the Sáshtángam i. e. touching the ground with the 8 members of the body, and then offer their gift. This temple possesses 2,000 batties of rice-land and annually receives on this festive occasion Rupees 400 from Government! The origin of Irpu and Hérumálu-játre is based upon 788 798 799 539 a common Brahminical legend:—One day when Ráma, with his followers, was living in this place, his younger brother Lakshmana in a fit of madness insulted him by returning the bow and arrows which Lakshmana some time before had received from Ráma. Repenting of his rashness, Lakshmana asked forgiveness, offering at the same time to throw himself into a large fire as an expiation for his crime. He shot an arrow against the foot of the Irpu rocks, when a large fire flared up into which he threw himself. In order to save his

1 / [Errata: the words "and Pressure" should be omitted. See Corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 493 -- Analyst]

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brother, Ráma immediately created a river, which up to the present day is called Lakshmanatírtha, but it was too late. Ráma afterwards desired to consecrate the spot and ordered Hanuman to bring a Linga from Kási (Benáres) within one hour and a half. During his absence Ráma, fearing that Hanuman would not be back in time, made a Linga himself of river-sand, in which operation he was surprised by Hanuman, who flew into a rage for having troubled himself in vain. He twisted his enormous tail round one of the neighbouring hills, *Hanumanbetta*, and attempted to upset it. Ráma, to comfort the furious monkey-god, assured him that Hanuman's Linga should become even more famous than his own. So the new Linga was set up at Hérumálu and the festive day of its worship precedes that of the Linga at Irpu!

In April and December there are játres to the *Iggudappa-kunda* in Padinálknád, where Tulu-Brahmins have a temple and receive the oblations of the Coorgs. It often happens, that a sick Coorg vows his weight in rice to that temple, and, no doubt, the heavier the man the more acceptable and effective the gift!

On the *Hattur hill* or *Kuntada-betta* in Beticlnád there is an annual játre in honor of Isvara or Siva who has there a little stone-temple dedicated to him. In 1853 the dilapidated temple was rebuilt at the expense of the Takkas and headmen of Beticlnád and their names are written on a stone slab in the temple, which is only 15 feet square, but substantially built with a Linga in front. It stands near the brink of the precipice which is about 500 feet deep and whence a beautiful view is obtained over Kiggatnád. There is also a remarkable stone on the very edge of the precipice about 2 feet broad and 5 feet long, where childless or unmarried people bring offerings of betel leaves, perform worship and turn three times round, believing that this ceremony will insure issue to the barren woman, or a suitable partner to the unmarried youth.

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On the north side, a little below the temple, there is a small tank with perennial water, which is considered holy, but 100 years ago it is said to have been defiled by a Chándála woman bathing in it, when the spring ceased to flow for some time.

On the south-east ridge a cave is shown which, according to Brahminical discovery, offered an asylum to the exiled Pándus! After their departure the cave was occupied by a tiger, which with due respect for the játre quits his abode 7 days before the feast and afterwards returns.

On the precipitous side of the rock there are nests of vultures and several hundreds of beehives.

For seven days before the Tulásankramana in the village Muguṭagéri at the foot of the hill, the ryots assemble one from each house at the Mandu and sing Coorg chants in praise of Isvara. On the night of the 7th the inhabitants of the whole nád come together, disguising themselves in masks of 18 various descriptions, they then go to the Ambala and dance and sing to the sound of the tomtom. The day following a light hollow frame, representing a horse, made of cane-work, is decked out so as to hide the lower part of the man's body who carries it, making it appear as if he rode the horse. The multitude then ascend the hill in procession, headed by the horse and a band of musicians, dance round the temple and bring their offerings of water, fruit and money.

The *Pálúr játre* in Kuyingherinád in honor of Pálúrappa, brother of Iggudappa, is a similar affair, which takes place in the month of April. The temple was rebuilt only a few years ago at a considerable expense and chiefly by the exertions of a Coorg official whose zeal and devotion one could wish had been employed in a better cause, especially in the education of his ignorant and superstitious nád people!

Amongst the játres beyond this country those visited by the Coorgs are four: *Subramanya* on the northern frontier of Coorg, which, in December, attracts a great number of people,

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as with the feast there is connected a cattle-fair and the sale of superior metal vessels and idols; *Baitur* in Malabar to which in January chiefly the people of Beppunád and Yedenalknád proceed, they also send rice to the temple; *Payavur* also in Malabar, and especially supported and in February visited by the Katiednád-Coorgs, who send from one to ten buttics of rice per house; *Nanchanagódu* in Mysore which comes off in December.

f. Dévastánas, Mattas and Musjids.

The Coorg Dévastánas or Pagodas are mostly of an insignificant character; none is distinguished for great antiqnity or structural beauty; most of them are but rude village shrines of mud walls and thatched roofs within a gloomy grove and not calling for any particular description. A passing notice may be, perhaps, bestowed on the *Omkarésvara-dévastána*[1] at Mercara, which stands in a hollow just below the Superintendent's Court and is built in the same style as the Rajahs' tombs, but with a small tank in the temple yard. From the centre of the tank a pretty little pavilion rises, which is connected with the land by a balustrated passage. The priests or pújáries of these places are chiefly Tulu, Havige and Karnátaka-Brahmins; the former are divided into 3 branches: the Kótu, Kandávara, and Shivalli-Brahmins, which latter are the most numerous in Coorg. The Havige-Brahmins are Smártaru, residing near Honore in North Canara whose native tongue is Canarese. They worship both Vishnu and Siva, and the marks on their foreheads are put horizontally. The Karnátaka-Brahmins are immigrants from Mysore.

There are altogether 863 pagodas or temples in Coorg and 57 Mattas or Jangams, of the total of which places 549 share a Government contribution of 13,800 Rupees annually in cash and 9,474 Rupees worth of remitted assessment from endowed landed property; 372 places only are maintained by

[1] [Errata: This should read "Onkarésvara-dévastána". See corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 473 -- Analyst]

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decided, that Kávéri should not be allowed to proceed; but the Coorgs declared, that a woman should not be forced to marry against her will. The enraged Agastia Muni pronounced a curse upon the Coorgs, that the generation of Coorgs should decrease, that their women should not tie their garments in front, that the sown rice should not grow and that their cows should not give milk. Kávéri Amma who was the patroness of the Coorgs counteracted the curse as well as she could in the following words: "the Coorg shall increase, but the Amma-Codagas decrease; the Coorg women shall tie their garments behind; the sown paddy shall be transplanted and the cows be milked after the calves have drunk." So saying she tried to escape, and on being held by Agastia by the border of her garment, she turned to the right and flowed rapidly away. Hence the place, where this occurred, was called Balamúri (turning to the right). A linga has been [788] erected near the spot by the Brahmins and it is yearly visited in Tulámása at the time of the Kávéri feast by Coorgs and others, who bathe in the river. Dodda-Virájender built here also a rest-house, which, though over 60 years old, is still in tolerable preservation.

The only object this legend can have is, not to clear up the origin of the indigenous priesthood of Coorg, but to obscure and bury it under the rubbish of Puranic lore which eludes every historical investigation.

7. ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURES AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL REMAINS IN COORG.

a. Palaces.

Besides the *Mercara-Palace*, there are two other Aramanes, one at *Nálknád* and the other in *Halerinád*, but neither is remarkable for extent or elegance. The palace at Nálknád

[Errata: This should read "The Coorgs shall." See Corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 473 -- Analyst]